

AUSSIE TV TURNS 25 THIS WEEK

• **BRUCE GYNGELL** has a holy audience for Australia's first TV broadcast — it's the then Bishop Loane, of Sydney (now the Most Rev. Sir Marcus Loane, Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia). **BELOW:** Twenty-five years later, Bruce Gyngell as he appears today.

THAT FIRST FLICKER

OUR EARLIEST SMALL-SCREEN STAR REMEMBERS

TWENTY-FIVE years ago this week, a youthful employee of Sydney's Channel Nine became the first person to be seen on television in Australia.

The date, September 16, 1956, saw not only the launching of the television industry in this country but the beginning of Bruce Gyngell's own career in television.

Now aged 52, the former chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Control Board is at present working as a special consultant to the multicultural television network, Channel 0/28.

And he looks back on a quarter of a century of personal involvement in the industry, both before and behind the cameras.

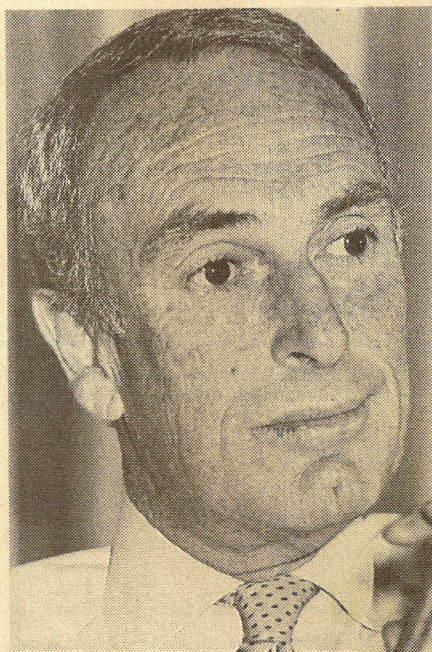
TV WEEK asked Mr Gyngell to recall the highlights of his career . . .

"I think undoubtedly the highlight for me was that opening night on Channel 9 in Sydney and that early period when television was just beginning," he said.

"I think it must have been a bit like going to war. There was a marvellous sense of philosophic commitment in the one direction.

"Another great experience was capturing that same sense of communal commitment with the staff at Channel 0/28."

Mr Gyngell spent 15 years with Channel 9 before joining the Seven Network where he pioneered the "Seven Revolu-



tion" that carried the network to the top of the ratings.

In the early '70s he moved to Britain where he worked with the Sir Lew Grade (now Lord Grade) organisation.

And he describes his time in Britain as "being full of highlights."

He recalls discussing with Lew Grade the bewildering difference in the costs of

television production compared to Australia.

"His advice to me was simple. Add one nought for Britain and two noughts for the United States," Mr Gyngell said.

"It really did work and it brought home to me that the final cost of a production is really dependent on how much time you spend on it."

For Bruce Gyngell, a "major mistake" in Australian TV over the past 25 years has been the use of the VHF (very high frequency) band for transmission instead of UHF (ultra high frequency).

Sydney and Melbourne channels have only recently begun telecasting simultaneously in both VHF and UHF.

But Mr Gyngell remembers that submissions were made to the Government as far back as 1958 to change the frequencies.

(The UHF band provides clearer reception in areas where the VHF signal is poorly received.)

As for the future, Mr Gyngell is convinced that anything's possible.

"I have a theory that if there's any validity in the statement that a man uses only 10 per cent of his mental capacity, then it is quite probable we are only effectively using 10 per cent of the potential of the technology that we have created," he said.

"I think that a group of people could sit down and fantasise about the future of television and that all of it could come true in some shape or form."